

James D. (Blue Jeans Bill) Williams collection

S1424

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May 27, 2015

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Rare Books and Manuscripts
140 North Senate Avenue
Indianapolis, Indiana, 46204
317-232-3671

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Summary Information

Repository	Rare Books and Manuscripts
Creator	Cobb, Thomas R. (Thomas Reed), 1828-1892
Title	James D. (Blue Jeans Bill) Williams collection
Date	1876-1880
Extent	0.01 Cubic feet 1 folder
Language	English
Text [Folder]	S1424

Preferred Citation

James D. (Blue Jeans Bill) Williams collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library

Biographical Note

James Douglas Williams was called Blue Jeans Bill because he wore "a fine quality of blue-jeans all his life practically except in the summer months." When he became wealthy, he had suits made of denim and lined with silk. He was born January 16, 1808 in Ohio, and died November 20, 1880, shortly before the end of his term as governor. A Democrat, James was the only farmer elected as the Governor of Indiana, serving from 1877 to 1880. His wife, Nancy Huffman, whom he married in 1831 in Columbus, Indiana, gave him seven children and ran the family farm of 3,000 acres in central Indiana. He served in the Indiana House of Representatives (1844-1860), the Indiana Senate (1860-1872), and the U.S. House of Representatives (1875-1876). He is buried in the Walnut Grove Cemetery near Monroe City, Indiana. The cemetery is on the ground he donated for the Walnut Grove Methodist Church.

Scope and Contents

There are four items in this collection: (1) an April 20, 1876 letter from Thomas R. Cobb to Honorable James D. Williams informing him that he was selected as the Democratic candidate for governor for the next October election; (2) an April 29, 1876 letter from J. D. Williams to Honorable T. R. Cobb, Chairman of the Democratic State Convention, in Vincennes, accepting the nomination; (3) an April 25, 1879 certificate signed by James D. Williams, appointing John Collett as chief of the Department of Statistics and Geology; and (4) a handwritten, undated, two-page biography of "Ex-Governor James D. (Blue Jeans) Williams," which must have been written sometime after 1888, because that year is given in reference to a presidential election. The unknown biographer wrote: "During the governor's term a public log rolling was given on the farm of Dr. Furnas near Danville, Ind. at which Gov. Williams drove the yoke of fine red oxen of Dr. Furnas to drag the logs to the various log heaps made in the pasture that day. It was such a novelty to see a governor of Ind. driving a yoke of oxen, that the event was heralded thruout the country and excursions were run into Danville early that day as well as carriages, buggies, wagons etc. to carry the people to see such an unknown sight. Thousands of people were there from all walks of life."

Arrangement

This collection is arranged chronologically.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Rare Books and Manuscripts

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Legal title, copyright, and literary rights reside with Rare Books and Manuscripts, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, IN. All requests to publish or quote from manuscripts must be submitted to Rare Books and Manuscripts.

Custodial History

This collection was received by Rare Books and Manuscripts as a donation.

Accruals

No further additions are expected.

Processing Information

Collection processing and finding aid completed 2015/04/23 by Nikki Stoddard Schofield.

Controlled Access Headings

Personal Name(s)

- Collett, John
- Williams, James D., 1808-1880

Subject(s)

- Biography
- Correspondence
- Indiana--Politics and government--19th century